

Music House

F O R C H I L D R E N



UNDERSTANDING MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

FOR MUSIC PRACTITIONERS, KEY ADULTS AND PARENTS

Acknowledgements:

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WHY MUSIC?



As parents, educators and early years specialists we might ask ourselves, whether music is beneficial to our babies and young children. Does music really support attachment, communication, social and learning skills? Shouldn't we just enjoy music for music's sake?

Peoples fascination with sound, song and music making goes back to pre-historic times. Our lives are enriched with sound, melody and rhythm. Do we truly understand the significance of music in our everyday life and the role it plays in our earliest development?

Music nurtures and enhances early communication, physical, aural and visual development. Spontaneous or organised music making involves moving, listening, looking, feeling, vocalising and playing. Music is a multimodal experience that supports early life skill development. Regular, playful musical interactions with loved adults strengthen attachment and nurture a feeling of belonging.

In young children music has the inherent ability to:

- nurture multimodal curiosity (involving moving, listening, looking and vocalising)
- enhance emotional and social confidence and encourage spontaneity
- capture imaginative play and child-initiated responses
- be playful, creative and joyful
- make sense to children because it encapsulates all forms of expression
- provide meaning and be memorable
- provide the opportunity for personal, creative and dramatic animation
- explores practical and theoretical musical concepts in relatable ways

Music House for Children's early years music provision is supported by educators, music specialists, musicians and families and incorporates research from case studies and practical observation. Our approach to teaching music encapsulates learning through creative joy and embeds guidelines from the long established UK's Early Years Foundation Stages.

The early years are outlined and mapped in two well established documents – **The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage** and the non-statutory guidance, **Development Matters in the Early Years**. Each of these documents make clear to practitioners and carers, how to facilitate meaningful learning in young children. A separate document entitled **Musical Development Matters** offers guidance to specific musical development via broad musical experiences.

The **Prime Areas** of learning and development are:

Communication & Language Physical Development Personal, Social & Emotional Development

The **Specific Areas** of learning and development are:

Literacy Mathematics Understanding the World Expressive Arts & Design

Very young children are naturally curious and engage multimodally as defined by the **Characteristics of Effective Learning**:

- **Playing and exploring (Engagement)**– investigating, experiencing and showing willingness to try
- **Actively learn (Motivation)**– concentrate on an activity, persevere through difficulty and enjoy achievement
- **Creating and thinking critically (Thinking)**– have and develop their own ideas, link them together and develop strategies for doing things.



MUSIC AND THE PRIME AREAS

Communication & Language

Language originates from sound play resulting in subsequent melodic and rhythmical patterns. These musical features are developed through playful, imaginative sound-making where toddlers express their desires and feelings. These early musical utterances help develop speech which is supported by repeated rhyming patterns, songs and vocal games. Formal and informal, age appropriate musical activities and resources develop verbal and non-verbal communication.

Music activities are sociable and help young children communicate through shared experiences. In time, musical play can help develop a child's preferences and characteristics.



Physical Development

Young children are rarely still when engaging in musical activities. Musical games compel walking, running, jumping, stretching, turning and so on. Through music, babies can share activities with their loved adult, be tickled during wiggly sounds or bounced during syncopated music. Stories, building and active play are all enhanced by music through song, sound-play or instrumental exploration.

Thoughtfully planned music activities support children's understanding of how their body works; fine (small) and gross (large) motor action. Favourite topics such as dancing can be brought to life with appropriate sounds and instrumental play. Through musical games, children learn how to use the space safely and to look out for their peers. Later instrumental learning develops life skills still further.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Music can be used to explore different emotional contexts and helps babies and children manage new experiences. Engaging in a range of sociable music activities makes young children feel included and valued. Music helps develop a child's characteristics and relate to others.

Repeated and familiar melodies are often comforting and encourage group participation without pressure. Spontaneous musical play can be a deeply personal experience, simultaneously providing a platform for self-expression.



MUSIC AND THE SPECIFIC AREAS

Music explores and meets the specific areas of learning without pressure; in playful and age appropriate ways. For example, learning about mathematics is achieved musically through playing instruments together in time, counting in multiples, playing in groups of instruments and so on. In other areas such as literacy, music enhances understanding when used to dramatise storytelling, bring descriptive words to life, and provide soundscapes to whole texts.

Learning instrument names, music history and music technology provides relevant curriculum links and enriches a child's understanding of cultural associations and enjoyment of the huge variety of music genres. Understanding the world through music provides incredibly rich, inclusive and sociable experiences, is memorable and relatable.

Childrens' ability to analyse and be curious can be observed during music making. They play, explore and come up with new ways to create stories and adventure. With appropriate songs supported by physical, aural and visual resources, children can relate directly to a topic, drawing on a tactile, multimodal exploration.

With electronic gadgets such as iPads, phones and tablets now available at home, accessible learning through music technology can be spontaneous and fun. Sensitively planned use of technology provides relevant and sociable experiences for children and their friends.

Babies and young children experience and learn through their immediate environment in multimodal ways. This means looking, watching, hearing, listening, feeling, touching and moving – sometimes all at once! Interacting with friends or a loved adult ignites positive social behaviour. In a home environment these shared moments are often secure and comforting.

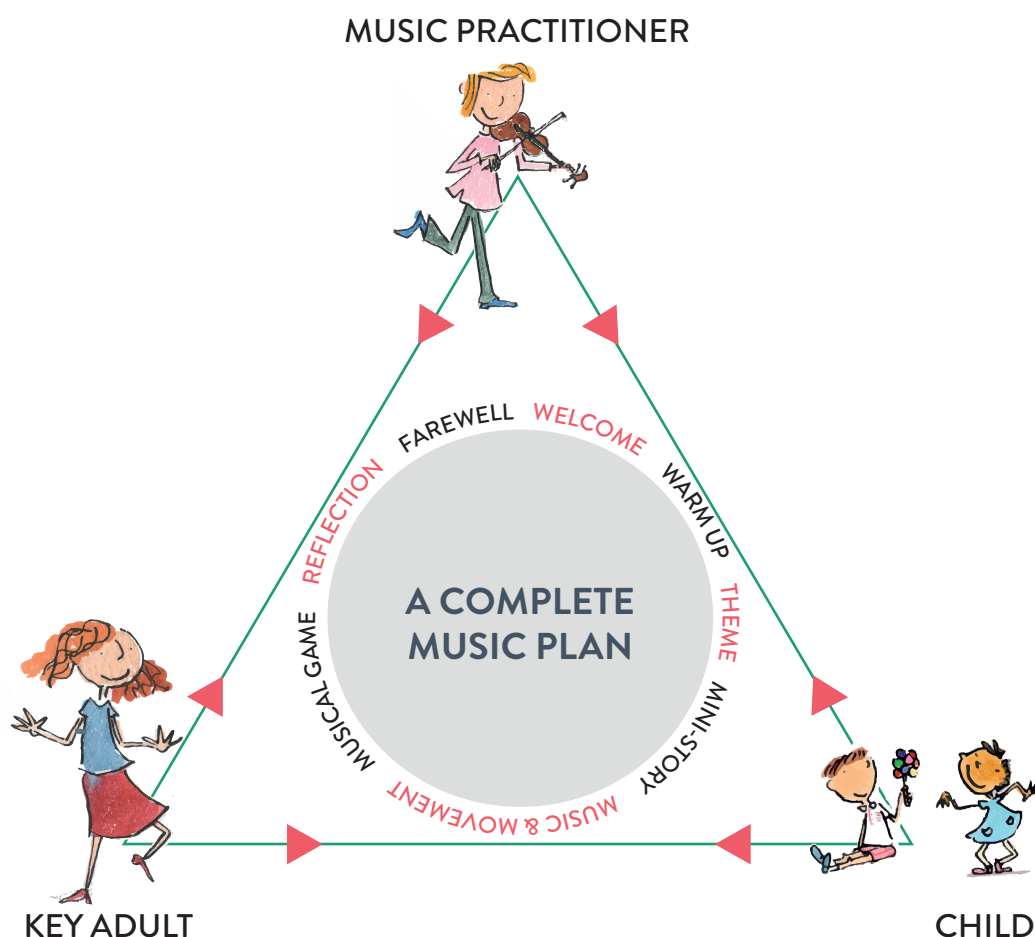


Encouraging children to engage in a variety of spontaneous and semi-structured music-making provides children with the opportunity to interact with others, explore and comprehend (the topic, environment, activity).

MUSIC AT HOME AND IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

Creating, sharing and playing music can happen anywhere, anytime and with one or more children and adults. Facilitating music can be spontaneous, structured or semi-structured. Musical moments could be 2 minutes or 50 minutes long! The time of the day, the weather, the environment or a child's recent activity will very likely influence the kind of musical experience you want to initiate.

Each of the eight modules shown in the diagram below have musical objectives.



Each module provides the opportunity to engage and experience music making with a core objective in mind. The purpose of each module is not to restrain spontaneity or imprison creativity, but to provide a flexible platform from which key adults can note responses. Whether a parent, carer or early years specialist, each module or collection of modules can be used to assess children's preferences, characteristics and areas that require further development.

You might want to see how your child is responding through a social module (Welcome). Alternatively the Musical Game module might tell you about your child's characteristics through leadership, vocalising, turn-taking or developing the game. Let us now focus on each module individually to see how they can be used effectively in musical learning and/or developing language and other skills.

MUSIC HOUSE FOR CHILDREN'S LESSON MODULES

Welcome

Enjoy welcome songs and poems in a musical and social. Promote vocalising, word play, sound making, moving and listening.

Warming up

Invigorate the body using sounds, melody and rhythm to awaken the mind and create a sense of being part of something special and fun.

Theme or Topic

Explore new subject matter in musically imaginative ways, involving indoor or outdoor visuals, instruments vocal sounds, body percussion, songs or stories. Extend vocal and musical responses that are shared and challenged.

Mini-story

Immerse counting numbers or choosing shapes and describing sizes through a mini-story or poem that is familiar, specially devised or reconstructed. Explore different rhythmical patterns through recitation and turn-taking, using key or anchor words relating to a topic. Engage a group through turn-taking and separating the different story parts into different music groups e.g. shakers and drums.

Music with Movement

Develop awareness of the body through creative adventures using lively music. Explore gross and fine (large and small) motor movement through song and playing instruments. Challenge spatial perception (jumping, bending, twirling, running) through the music heard. Use music along with dance and drama to provide a multi-arts experience.

Musical Game

Continue to develop a sense of adventure and challenge the children through multimodal experiences with a song or piece that encourages group and solo participation. Think of different ways of approaching the same activity in the space available.

Reflection

Allow time and space for children to listen and reflect on a song, piece, or live instrumental performance. Encourage individual responses compelled by the music, for example, pretending to play along, dancing or making sounds. Share the activity together, involving key adults.

Farewell

Imbibe a sense of closure of whatever has taken place. Acknowledge those around, nurture practical social skills and patterns of behaviour towards the person/s, visual resource.

MUSIC WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND LANGUAGE DELAY

What happens if your child has autism? Are traits noticed in day-to-day activities? Perhaps you are working with children with deafness or children with profound cognitive disabilities. Can music be relatable and relevant with these children too? Musical activities and encouraging spontaneous musical play can be incredibly helpful in deciphering preferences, areas of need and concerns such as emerging signs of language delay and characteristics of autism.

Using music as part of young children's experiences often strengthens their capacity to manage and improve communication and other skills. Through sound play, moving to music and song and listening games key adults can often find alternative ways to communicate.

Children with educational needs are generally more responsive in smaller groups. Individual music activities are helpful for more detailed monitoring or specialist focus areas. Participating in small groups is sociable and encourages participation, sharing and new challenges without pressure. Collaborative sharing of skills and information helps to build a complete picture that in turn maximises the chance of positive outcomes.

Music House for Children's approaches to teaching retain core musical objectives whilst encouraging flexibility and adaptability. Interactive music making provides emotionally charged experiences and helps everyone feel valued and respected. Using our flexible framework includes playing, exploring, creating, interacting and vocalising. As with neuro-typical children, music is embedded in the early years framework and is additionally helpful for nursery and specialist settings to document progression in children with additional needs..

Music impacts areas including:

- Cognitive development
- Physical movement, exploration and ability
- Vocal utterance, communication and language
- Social awareness, engagement and interaction
- Understanding and supporting needs at home and in new spaces
- Shared sibling engagement and enjoyment of expressive, imaginative games
- Self-development, and communication (including communication through music)
- Holistic and emotional awareness
- Education and intrinsic joy at all levels

Chosen modules in conjunction with appropriate teaching resources are helpful to practitioners in monitoring and assessing children's responses through music; notably communication and social skills development.



THE BENEFITS OF REGULAR MUSIC MAKING

Music making should be joyous and creatively led. Musical learning can be achieved through bite-sized activities or full length lessons using all the modules listed earlier. Music compels babies and young children to be analytical, critical, curious and spontaneous. It heightens environmental awareness, enriches new experiences and makes children aware of people around them. Music is emotionally pervasive too! It can emotionally excite or calm and is inclusive without judgement.

What components make up music? What can children who engage in regular music making expect to experience and learn?

Beat and Rhythm

Beat is a regular, even and repetitive pulse. An example of regular beat is the ticking of a clock. The time between every tick is exactly the same. Rhythm provides interesting adjustments to regular beat. Rhythms can be very straight forward and follow beat exactly, or can be grouped together to provide unexpected and surprising musical shapes.

Children will experience beat and rhythm through sound-play and melodies. Children will learn how to control and recognise regular and irregular beat and the division of time. They will learn how to recognise, respond to and create musical patterns (rhythm) using instruments, body percussion and voice. Children will be encouraged to understand beat as they accompany songs or chant.

Pitch

Children will experience and learn how music goes up and down through song and multimodal activities. They will learn to recognise pitch through moving, sound making and listening. Changes of pitch will be explored through listening to different genres of music. Pitch will be enjoyed as a means of expression through solo and group exploration.

Tempo

Being aware of fast and slow music can be achieved through imaginative musical storytelling and adventure, instrumental play and songs. Through creative exploration children will become aware of and understand how sounds and music can speed up and slow down. They will learn to recognise and respond to different tempo and create own and group composition by using tempo as a means of expression.

Dynamics

Just as with speech children will experience loud and soft sounds through moving (stamping, tip-toes), singing, instrumental play and extended storytelling. They will listen to, and appreciate loud, soft and silent sections in music. Through different music genres children can appreciate decreasing and increasing dynamics, and learn to control their own input to provide imaginative flair to a piece or activity. Children will be able to compose using dynamics as a means of expression.

Duration

What happens when music starts? Children will enjoy counting and repeated musical play through their experience of a whole music activity. They will become leaders in starting and stopping music, appreciate and value those silent moments, and be aware of duration through the process of doing. Children will take delight in composing and being in charge of when the music starts, where it goes, and how it ends.

Characteristics

Active emotional play is a critical part of developing children's ability to self-regulate and exchange information. Musical play will help children develop personal characteristics, and respond to expressive feedback from their friends, peers and key adults. Children will create own and group compositions using particular sounds or themes to create expression, texture, timbre.

Shape and Form

Children will learn how music has a beginning, middle and end. They will recognise and respond to different shapes and forms through playing, singing, composing and storytelling.

Experiencing all these musical areas over time helps children to build a complete understanding of how music works. The characteristics of music correlates closely with the characteristics of real life (such as allow space and time to listen, to show expression in vocalising, moving quickly then slowing down). In the context of playfulness is relatable and makes sense. Providing musical experiences should always be provided with clear musical objectives in mind – is it tempo or dynamics or both? Are they learning about pitch, or developing compositional skills? With clear objectives other useful and positive outcomes often emerge.



LEARNING, SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIVE MILESTONES

Babies and young children develop at an incredibly rapid rate in the first few years of life. They will absorb thousands of physical, visual, aural, vocal and emotional experiences that for the most part are internally processed, experienced learnt, applied and strengthened. The following milestones are guidelines only since every child develops at their own pace.

Babies – 12 months

Develop music awareness, communication, physical and sociable behaviour through routine and spontaneous activities and resources in a familiar environment with key adults.

Experience playful musical games involving sound-play and movement.

Develop attachment for key adult/s through shared enjoyment of gentle, free-flow music making

Engage with, and enjoy songs, rhymes and topics with visuals and instrumental exploration.

Show attention and responses to particular musical expression, instrumental sounds, songs and poems.

12 – 24 months

Initiate, share and respond emotionally, vocally and physically to playful musical experiences.

Begin to develop multi-sensory awareness and communicative skills and show preferences.

Engage with particular sound experiences and resources.

Express emotional responses to a range of musical experiences with their peers and key adult.

Show preferences to musical experiences that are relatable and deeply personal.

24 – 36 months

Engage independently and with others in exploratory, playful and semi-structured music activities.

Develop curiosity in how music works in the context of sounds, instrumental play and movement.

Engage in and understand musical objectives such as tempo, pitch and dynamic.

Respond physically and vocally to musical games involving resources and emotional play.

Recall a range of sounds and short melodic patterns, songs and poems.

Continue to develop musical play independently.

36 – 48 months

Engage in reflective and pro-active ways with music using singing, moving and instrumental sounds.

Engage with and initiate a range of songs, musical games and compositions.

Accompany and share with others musical play, sound, songs and movement.

Understand and develop tempo, pitch, dynamics, rhythm and beat through play, moving and songs.

Appreciate, explore and understand musical terms and instrument names.

Respond and move to music heard, recognise and build on the silent moments.

Recognise cultural music and reflect on the different sounds and music heard.

Spontaneously perform together and independently.

48 – 60 months

Understand the elements of music including rhythm and beat.

Learn musical symbols and terms in relation to songs, poems and music activities.

Develop pitch appreciation, understanding and ability to replicate on tuned instruments.

Develop memory and recall pieces heard through shared music making.

Explore and engage in different voice and instrumental parts together and independently.

Explore, appraise and reflect on the different instrumental sounds.

Choose different songs to reflect themes and topics.

Develop stories, and feedback through musical experiences and practice.

Appreciate different genres of music including instruments, cultures and language.

Work together towards performances involving sound, song, poems and instruments.

Actively apply musical ideas to other areas of the curriculum.

60 – 72 months

Enjoy music making together and independently using instruments, moving and voice.

Understand musical notation and terms and build on their knowledge to add to music making.

Lead a composition with a group, in pairs or alone.

Recognise known songs through the use of notated flash cards and vocalising.

Memorise notation of phrases of up to 8 bars patterns.

Appreciate and engage in different and more complex rhythms.

Combine pulse and rhythm together and independently.

Extend vocal range in pitch and expression.

Develop knowledge of percussive and orchestral instruments.

Enjoy ostinato (repeated phrase patterns) and melody based activities using instrument, body percussion and voice.

Develop stories through instrumental and vocal composition.

Understand musical form and structure.

Engage in creative musical adventures by immersing music within stories and life experiences.

With regular music making, by the time they begin primary school children will have experienced, recognised, composed and participated in a range of songs, poems, musical stories, instrumental play and movement. Children will appreciate and understand a wide variety of musical terms. They will play, appreciate and understand different instruments, their origin and history. Children will appreciate and understand multi-arts compositions – movement, singing, playing and composing, and enjoy performance, sharing music making and composition.

Our penultimate aim is for all children to be able to engage in joyful, semi-structured, spontaneous music making as a constant experience through babyhood, pre-nursery and nursery ages. We hope that by appreciating the significance of music in early childhood key adults will be able to give their children a lasting resource to embed and enrich life skills, communication and learning.

LINKS TO USEFUL DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf

Development Matters in the EYFS :

<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Development-Matters.pdf>

Musical Development Matters :

<https://www.early-education.org.uk/earlyyearsmusicaldevelopmentmatters>

Musical instruments and books :

<https://www.musichouseforchildren.com/resources>

Case studies, useful documents :

<https://www.musichouseforchildren.com/case>



Emma Hutchinson has been involved in early childhood music all her professional life. With an MA in Early Childhood Music from the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), a BA(Hons) from Dartington College of Arts and an LTCL from Trinity College of Music, Emma is a founding member of Music Educators and Researchers in Young Children (MERYC - England), a core member of the London Early Years Music Network (LEMYN) and a Fellow with the Royal Society of Arts. Music House for Children is a partner with many groups in research, training and delivery of early childhood music.

Emma established Music House for Children in 1994 as a centre for music teaching, training and resources, with the main focus being on nurturing musicality and other areas of learning in early childhood. She launched Music House Resources in 2007 alongside training courses to give families, children, musicians and educators access to quality music activities in which to nurture communication, language, life skills and joyous, creative, child-led learning. The books reflect Emma's ongoing commitment to engaging young children in a range of multi-sensory activities that are fun, playful and interactive.

Emma's long term vision is to embed music as a compulsory right for young children, toddlers and babies everywhere.

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